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JUSTITIA ET PAX

Europese Commissies Justitia et Pax

European Commissions Justice and Peace
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Europäische Kommissionen Justitia et Pax

STATEMENT ON EAST TIMOR

In spite of the recognition that the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize gave to the search for peace in the disputed land of East Timor, human rights violations perpetrated there have continued and even appear to have worsened during the past few months. This is a source of great concern. The large numbers of Indonesian troops in the territory are one of the main reasons contributing to the continuing violence. It seems that no step towards a peaceful solution can be successfully taken until there is a drastic reduction of the armed forces.

In the past year the United Nations and respected world leaders have increased their efforts in the search for a negotiated peace for East Timor. Yet we must register grave concern at the slow progress towards reconciliation between the interested parties.

European governments have a moral duty to reconsider the consequences of arms sales to the armed forces of Indonesia. They must consider the dreadful results of this arms trade, thus avoiding any practical or moral support to the abuses which have taken place in East Timor. We welcome recent moves by the British government to review trade and arms sales policy.

Recalling the Common Position concerning East Timor adopted by the European Union in June 1996, we hope that the European Union will continue to press for the establishment of an effective UN Human Rights presence in East Timor. We appeal to the EU Member States to encourage the parties to make real progress in the talks aimed at forging a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the conflict which fully respects the legitimate aspirations of the Timorese people who, as Pope John Paul II said in the address to the Diplomatic Corps on 10.01.98 "are still awaiting more peaceful conditions in order to be able to look to the future with confidence".

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Secretariat: Rhijngeesterstraatweg 40,
P.O. Box 1031, 2340 BA Oegstgeest, Netherlands,
telephone +31 71 5175901, fax +31 71 5176261

Bank: Postbank, A/C number 74.60.344,
Rabobank Leiden/Oegstgeest, A/C number 33.55.22.289,
"St. Justitia et Pax inzake Europese conferentie"